

*A
Fifty-Year
Project*

To
Combat
Socialism
on the
Campus



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author of this pamphlet, Frank Chodorov, is a distinguished libertarian economist. A graduate of Columbia University, a former school teacher, he is now devoting his full time to the preservation of free enterprise.

His monthly news magazine, *Analysis*, is one of the most trenchant and most philosophical analyses of the current American scene. In addition, his articles have appeared frequently in *Plain Talk* and *Human Events*.

This pamphlet is one of the most thought-provoking which has been issued by the National Council for American Education. The suggestion that Mr. Chodorov makes herein, might indeed be the solution for America's educational problems. It is well worth reading—and carefully considering.

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A Fifty-Year Project to Combat Socialism on the Campus

by Frank Chodorov

CAME 1950, and the Sunday supplement writers had something new to engage their talents. The achievements of the human race, particularly the American branch of it, during the first half of the twentieth century made good copy. Every accomplishment of note, in science, art industry or sports, received proper notice. Except one. And that one achievement of the last fifty years is far more startling, far more important from the long-term point of view, than anything the literary gentlemen paid their respects to. It was the transmutation of the American character from individualist to collectivist.

The replacement of the horse-and-buggy by the automobile is startling enough; but is it as startling as the contrast between Cleveland and Truman? This is not to compare one president against the other, but to point out the remarkable change in the character of the people presided over. Cleveland's remark that the government could not take care of the people who took care of it, was made because Americans thought that way; today, the handout principle of government is accepted by most Americans, from pauper to millionaire. At the beginning of the century the tradition of individualism that had flourished since the Revolution was still going strong; by 1950, only the physical composition of the individual remained, for his character had been well washed out by the caustic of socialism.

Anybody can make a machine, but the unmaking of a national character is the work of genius. The accomplishment is too great to be ignored. A study of just how it was done is in order, and it ought to be undertaken at once, before the American individualist becomes a subject for speculative archeology. There are still some living remnants of the Species, and traces of the way they behaved and thought have not yet been entirely obliterated. A thorough analysis of the character-transformation may well serve the twenty-first century in its disillusionment; and it may help them find their way back to a sense of freedom; provided, of course, such a work should escape the bonfire of past values that always lights up the road of socialism.

Socialism Comes to the Campus

At least one chapter of the book should deal with how the collectivist seed was implanted in the soft and fertile student mind forty-odd years ago. That's how it all began. Collectivism is, after all, only an idea, and the usual way of acquiring an idea is by learning. The followers of Marx are fond of saying

that socialism is an inevitable product of the forces of history; but, this manure of inevitability is the fertilizer they use to aid the idea of socialism in taking root and sprouting after it is planted. If the thing was to come anyhow, why have they been so assiduous in spreading the idea? Why did they bother to organize students' socialist clubs if socialism was inevitable "in the nature of things"?

Just how socialism first invaded the campus is not recorded. Perhaps a student or two became infected at some street corner and brought it in. The glorious promise of socialism gave it easy access to the idealistic adolescent mind, insufficiently fortified by reason or experience. At eighteen, one is ready to take up for every underdog, real or imaginary, and the opportunity to remake the world is most inviting. Very few students, however, paid much attention to the importation when it first appeared; one had enough to do to get over the difficult hurdles of the rigid curriculum that prevailed in those days. Besides, one had to prepare oneself for the arduous task of meeting the problems of the world as an individual. It was then taken for granted that one's way in life called for industry and self-improvement; politics or a government job were for the unfit only; you got an education so that you could the better take care of yourself, not society. While that tradition prevailed socialism made little headway on the campus.

The idealistic pretensions of socialism did capture a few hearts, while its vibrant and challenging slogans fed the nascent revolutionary flame of youth. Their intellectual vanity was flattered by the "scientific" claims of socialism; they knew all about surplus-value, which the others did not understand, and that made them an elite. The "science" was aided and abetted by such fighting words as "workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains," and the knight-errantry of the fuzzy chin was aroused to the full. Truth to tell, those who espoused socialism were among the most imaginative, volatile and articulate students; the fact that they were ignored or derided by their classmates simply added to their ardor, for it fed the sense of superiority that makes for martyrdom. They made some headway chiefly with those who could not break into the fraternities or could not make the athletic teams.

Conversion Without Understanding

In those early days the socialistic students were unorganized. They were held together by the bond of the unwanted. Their principal occupation was mutual conversion. When they got hold of a possible proselyte, they put him to a disadvantage by the ready speeches got out of their extra-curricular reading, mostly pamphlets, and the prospect was overpowered, if not convinced. They attracted some attention by their self-assurance and by their audac-

ity, which was their purpose in the first place. But, on the whole, they cut little figure on the campus; far less, let us say, than did the few students of Oriental origin who came to American colleges before World War I.

Conversion of Students

Not long after the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the organized socialistic student group began to appear and the apparatus of proselytizing was set up. Unauthorized posters advertising "noted" speakers adorned the official bulletin boards, and often the promise of enlightenment was supplemented with the assurance of refreshments. Conversion through the media of dances and punch was found to be even more effective than through literature and argument. The membership of these clubs grew.

Between the two world wars the socialists got going on their "inevitable" idea in dead earnest; they pushed it along with all the organizational ingenuity they possessed, and they possessed plenty. Lenin had taught them that one need not wait on the slow process of evolution; history could be hurried. The process of expedition consisted in the marshalling of the mass-mind behind an idea, whether understood or not; in fact, the less understood the better, for thinking might retard the action to which the historical forces are amenable. The teaching of "scientific" socialism was suspended and the necessity of "dynamism" was emphasized. Action for the sake of action was all that counted. Marx was spoken of and revered, but far more important than an understanding of what he taught was the doctrine of solidarity and the policy of movement.

The organizers paid special attention to the mass-mind on the campus, the mind that would eventually make the rules for other people to live by. Their efforts here were aided by the disillusionment that followed the war with the Central Powers. Taking advantage of this frame of mind among the students, the socialists set themselves up as the "prophets of pacifism," conveniently overlooking the militancy preached by Marx. Many a student became a socialist—that is, joined a socialist club—simply because he was opposed to war; which was all right with the doctrinaire leadership, whose goal was numbers, not understanding.

To make trouble for trouble's sake is a fundamental of socialist strategy, and the students' clubs followed that principle in campus affairs at any and all occasions. Their *esprit de corps* was thus improved. Nothing favored their purpose more than involvement in a strike, and they looked upon one in the neighborhood with great favor. It gave them an opportunity to harangue the crowd, pass out leaflets, do picket duty, charge the police, get themselves

arrested and martyred. It was a lark, to be sure, but a lark glamorized with a "noble" purpose. Active participation in some labor trouble was a cementing influence far more effective than intellectual agreement. It was a demonstration of the superiority of the group over the individual.

Came the New Deal

By the time the New Deal came upon us these college socialists were well organized. They had become intercollegiate in scope. At national conventions the boys and girls settled all the problems of mankind, national and international, present and future. They debated and resolved, resolved and debated, and went back to their respective campuses thoroughly exalted. They attracted attention, and among those attracted were sons of the detested capitalistic class, boys who were thrilled by the prospect of expiating the sins of their fathers on the altar of the "public good," meanwhile flattering their egos by the attendant publicity. Money to carry on the crusade was thus easier to come by.

Effects of Socialist Propaganda

The effects of three decades of organization and propaganda soon became evident. Thousands of graduates of these socialistic clubs had gone out into the world. It was natural that they should enter those fields in which ideas and opinions are the main stock in trade, and where training in organizational methods comes in handy; the teaching profession, labor unions, social work, law and politics, and, most important, the publishing business. Working themselves into positions of importance, they eased the way for a supporting cast of their own kind. Jobs for the faithful became plentiful; for non-believers the opportunities became scarcer and scarcer. Since the third decade of the century, therefore, a pedagogue of known individualistic inclinations has found employment increasingly difficult, and an anti-statist writer simply has no market for his wares. If a book of that type does get into print, thanks to a venturesome publisher, it is given short shrift by the reviewers, most of whom came out of the socialistic college environment, and its chances for wide reception are thus choked off; on the other hand, any kind of socialistic bilge is boosted into a masterpiece. The clan takes care of its own.

The New Deal was a product of this extra-curricular work in the colleges. When the "emergency" hit President Roosevelt, he had nobody to turn to for advice but the graduates of these socialistic clubs. The business men, the men who concern themselves with the making and selling of things, were in the main devoid of any knowledge of fundamental economics,

and too bewildered by the turn of events to be of much use in the situation. The loudmouthed theoreticians were more sanguine; besides, the books they had published qualified them as experts. It would be interesting to know how many of the professors who came to the aid of Mr. Roosevelt had been associated with socialistic groups in their college days; that would throw light on the transmutation of the American character.

The apparatus of the New Deal was most favorable for the "inevitable" idea, for it provided the sustenance necessary for effective propaganda work. No longer were the socialist workers dependent for their living on voluntary contributions; the taxpayer now fed them well, and they worked the better on full stomachs. Today, a bright young man cannot afford to entertain individualistic ideas, assuming that he happened on them in some dust-covered book, because such ideas carry a decided economic disadvantage. The best jobs in government, teaching, and writing go to those most loyal to the "new Americanism."

Help from the Enemy

The character of a nation is the way it thinks. American thought in 1950 is collectivistic because the seed of that kind of thinking was well planted in its most receptive minds during the early years of the century. What we have now is the fruition of careful and assiduous husbandry.

The climate of the times favored the socialists. They could point up the manifest injustices and incongruities that had developed under the prevailing system of private property, which made no distinction between productive effort and political privilege. The growth of monopolies, and the ruthlessness of their practices, presented an easy indictment of private property as a whole. It was a damaging indictment and the heart of youth was so touched that examination was precluded. Socialism, of course, proposes to substitute public for private monopoly, claiming that, with the "profit motive" gone, the evils inherent in monopoly would be wiped out. The inference is that under socialistic management monopoly would be an instrument for good only; which is a variation of the "chosen people" doctrine, and that catered to the conceit of the neophyte socialists.

Then, the obvious incongruity of the "boom and bust" economy helped the socialistic idea along, particularly as it came up with a plausible explanation and a cure; the going capitalism offered neither. Again, the recurrence of war under capitalism was a condemnation that youth could understand, and since socialism insisted that it had a preventative it was accepted sight unseen. Youth loves, never analyzes, a panacea.

Lack of acquaintance with their own philosophy, plus undue complacency, put the practicing capitalists at a disadvantage in meeting the challenge of youth. They had been in the driver's seat too long to consider dislodgment a possibility. Somewhere hovering over their heads, but not bothering them at all, were the ideas of Locke, Adam Smith, Jefferson and the other libertarians of the past two centuries; these were like heirlooms gathering dust in a closet and never taken out for examination or appreciation. As for the doctrine of natural rights, which is the foundation of capitalistic thought, it meant nothing to them.

Ideas Have Consequences

Under the circumstances, the idea of socialism took root and flourished. The question now, at the half-century mark, is whether it is destined to crowd out the remaining vestiges of individualism in the American culture. It would seem so. But, socialism is only an idea, not an historical necessity, and ideas are acquired by the human mind. We are not born with ideas, we learn them. If socialism has come to America because it was implanted in the minds of past generations, there is no reason for assuming that the contrary idea cannot be taught them. What the socialists have done can be undone, if there is a will for it. But, the undoing will not be accomplished by trying to destroy established socialistic institutions. It can be accomplished only by attacking minds, and not the minds of those already hardened by socialistic fixations. Individualism can be revived by implanting the idea in the minds of the coming generations.

So then, if those who put a value on the dignity of the individual are up to the task, they have a most challenging opportunity in education before them. It will not be an easy job. It will require the kind of industry, intelligence and patience that comes with devotion to an ideal. And the only reward they can hope for is that by the end of the century, the socialization of the American character will have been undone.

Things being as they are, perhaps the job should begin by going after the preadolescent mind, even in the kindergarten grade. The socialists, it might be recalled, did not neglect to turn nursery rhymes to their use, and since the advent of the comic book, the communists (or advanced socialists) have employed this medium of indoctrination. But that is a specialized effort that could well be deferred until the college mind, the mind that will soon enter the active arena, is taken care of. The assault must be made on the campus.

[NCAE believes it should be made in both places and in all grades between them. Ed.]

Assault is the proper word, and the proper attitude, for the proposed job. The possibility of winning over the faculty en masse to the individualistic idea might as well be dismissed beforehand simply because most professors are by and large beyond redemption: it is both the effect and the cause of the condition that is to be corrected. Here and there a welcome atavism will be found, but it will be rare, and the safe thing to do is to write off the faculty. That tactic, moreover, will find favor with the students, particularly those endowed with the gift of intellectual curiosity; to be able to controvert the dicta of the professor is always a sophomoric delight. To win the student over to the idea of individualism it is necessary to equip him with doubts regarding the collectivistic doctrines insinuated in the lecture room or in his text books. If the suggested undertaking should apply itself to a refutation of the "adopted" texts, especially in the fields of economics, social science and government, a veritable revolution could be started on the campus in short order; the vulnerability of these texts is all too obvious to even superficial examination.

The apparatus for initiating the project suggests itself. It would consist of a lecture bureau, manned by a secretariat and a corps of lecturers. The business of the bureau would be to arrange for lectures on or near the selected campuses. The lecturers—probably difficult to find these days—would have to be acquainted with socialistic theory as well as with the literature of individualism, for since the purpose is to uproot the trend of thought, the student would have to be impressed with its inadequacies. Whatever the subject matter of the lecture, the doctrine of the primacy of the individual, as against the supremacy of the social order, must be emphasized; thus, the student will learn to recognize in the class room or text book the insidious implication that the social order and its political establishment take precedence over the individual. Every lecture must contain a challenge.

It is unnecessary, in throwing out the suggestion, to detail an entire program. Once started, the project would develop a momentum of its own; the students would see to that. It might be suggested, however, that the lectures be followed up with the organization of Individualistic Clubs and an inter-collegiate affiliation. Prizes for essays on individualism would do much to stimulate thought; and a publication offering an outlet for articles would be a necessity. Out of these activities would come an *esprit de corps* based upon conviction and enthusiasm for a "new" idea. The individualist would become the campus radical, just as the socialist was forty years ago, and the aura of the "intellectual elite" would fall on him.

Is the effort worth while? To which one offers as answer another question: What in life is more worth while than the pursuit of an ideal?

The project outlined by Mr. Chodorov in this pamphlet very greatly needs doing.

A start has already been made. There are already individualist groups, clubs or cells in a number of colleges and universities. This Council has been instrumental in starting some of these and has helped in the expansion of others.

Mr. Chodorov, an able and convincing speaker himself, and other capable speakers have addressed college groups with excellent results.

This project, which is really two separate projects—the speakers bureau, and the formation of individualist clubs in the colleges—is part of this Council's program for 1951 and thenceforth. There are a number of things that you and all patriotic Americans can do to assist in these and other worthwhile endeavors to remedy the deplorable situation in the schools.

If you want to help, write to this Council for information as to how you may do so. It is of the utmost importance to the entire future of America to see that the present socialistic trend is stopped forthwith. The schools and colleges are truly the front line in the battle for the minds of men. Whether America is to remain American or become socialist depends upon the outcome of this crucial struggle. Join this Council and help in its important work to make the educational system truly American.

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